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e Call of Africa

BY BISHOP W. R. LAMBUTH

THE PATHFINDERS

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The Call of Africa.

EVERYTHING in Africa is colossal. The continent is 5,000 miles long and 4,000 miles wide at its greatest breadth and contains 11,500,000 square miles. You can lay the United States, Europe, India, and China upon Africa and still have enough left out of which to carve Great Britain. It has nearly twice the population of the United States, and 75,000,000 of these absolutely unreached. It has the longest river in the world, the greatest desert, the biggest cataract (Victoria Falls), the longest lake (Tanganyika), and the deepest and darkest area of need. It has well been styled the "Dark Continent."

THE BELGIAN CONGO.

West Central Africa, or the Congo Belge, is the portion which most interests us at present. It lies between Uganda and Lake Tanganyika on the east and the Atlantic Ocean and Angola on the west. On the north it is bounded by French Equatorial Africa, and on the south by Angola and Rhodesia. It lies on both sides of the Congo River, which in its course crosses the equator at Equatorville (or Coquilatville). Once styled the Congo Free State, it is now called the Congo Belge, and is a colony of Belgium. It is thirty times the size of the mother country, has a population of fifteen millions, and is broken up into tribes speaking as many as one hundred languages and dialects. The great Bantu language is the basic tongue for nearly all of these, and by its highly organized structure gives evidence of a stronger civilization in the past. Other evidences

of contact with ancient races are found in the tribal laws, customs, folklore, the art of working iron and copper, etc. But degeneration has been going on for centuries, and raw heathenism has brought on a terrible blight, blasted all hope, substituted for religion a fatalistic animism, and the leprosy of sin has wrought such havoc as to have reduced whole tribes to the most sensual orgies and to cannibalism.

ACTION OF THE BOARD.

In 1910 the Board of Missions of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, resolved to open a mission in Africa, and it fell to my lot to explore and pioneer the way. There were four reasons for establishing such a mission:

1. Terrible and tragic need staring the civilized and Christian world in the face.

2. The peculiar relation of the Southern white man to the negro, whom he knows, appreciates, and with whom he is better able to work as a missionary than any other.

3. The insistent invitation of the Southern Presbyterians for years to come and labor by their side in Africa and the wonderful success of their mission.

4. The command of Christ and the commission to the Church, "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature," given two thousand years ago but not yet carried out.

THE START.

Prof. John Wesley Gilbert, of Paine College, Augusta, Ga., a representative of the Colored Methodist Episcopal Church, desired to make the journey with me, since he has offered himself to his Church and to ours as a missionary. He met me in London, where we secured an outfit consisting of pith helmets, khaki suits, walking shoes, leggings, mosquito boots, barometer, compass, medicine chest of tabloids, etc. We sailed from Antwerp, Belgium, Saturday, October 14, and arrived at Matadi, at the head of navigation

on the Lower Congo, on Sunday, November 5, 1911.

On Monday we began a railway journey of two days to Stanley Pool, thus passing quickly through the zone which was so trying to missionaries in the early years. After ten days at the Pool waiting for a boat, we resumed our journey into the interior by way of the Congo, Kasai, and Lulua Rivers, and arrived at Luebo, the center of the Presbyterian work, on the 7th of December.

THE PRESBYTERIANS.

Here we found Dr. W. M. Morrison and seven other missionaries. They welcomed us with great cordiality. We remained two weeks and were astonished at the wonderful results of the work of twenty years—8,000 converts (now 10,000), 300 teachers and evangelists (200 of them self-supporting), the language reduced to writing, the Scriptures printed on their own press, industrial work and schools for boys and girls, etc. The principal of the girls' school, a colored woman from Alabama, sold her little home, paid her own way to Africa, and now, nearly seventy, she is still training the young women who are to aid in the work of making homes, establishing day schools, and evangelizing the remote interior.

On the 22d of the month we started from Luebo overland on our tour of exploration with sixty carriers, who bore our tent, hammocks, provisions, cloth, salt, medicine chest, typewriter, etc. Our pocketbook consisted of sixteen sacks of salt and many bales of cloth, money being of no value in the remote interior. For three days we were blocked because of our inability to secure more than forty carriers. After an appeal by Dr. Morrison the ruling elder and leading evangelist of the three hundred teachers and evangelists volunteered to go with us and twenty-two members of the Presbyterian Church, one of whom was a converted cannibal.

ON THE MARCH.

Our caravan stretched half a mile along the trail, Professor Gilbert at the head of the column and I myself bringing up the rear to prevent stragglers from running away or from falling into the hands of the savages. There were sections through which our men would not go alone, and we passed through two villages at war with each other, thirty-four having been killed on one side and nine on the other.

On our entire journey we crossed many rivers and streams, waded through swamps, met fifty chiefs, visited two hundred villages, treated four hundred patients, camped in a number of cannibal villages, were exposed to African fever, bitten a number of times by the tsetse fly while on the lower river; but by the goodness and mercy of God we escaped all these dangers, and, penetrating to the heart of the Batetela country, arrived at the village of the great Chief Wembo-Niama on Thursday, February 1, 1912. At first the chief, who was the largest man we met in all our travels, was distant and suspicious, but suddenly his whole demeanor changed. He could not conceal his joy. He had discovered a long-lost friend in Mudimbe, the evangelist, whom he had not seen for nearly twenty years and whose father was also a chief and had been shot down in a wild raid upon his village. Then our converted cannibal cook turned out to be another friend of his boyhood days. The chief had assigned us to an indifferent house on the side of the street. He now took us to his own house and, ordering his servants to bring out the biggest goat in the village, two baskets of rice, one of yams, and an abundance of fruit, made us at home. We remained four days, and at his urgent request to return we determined to open the mission in or near his village, believing the hand of God had shaped our course and raised up a friend.

THE LOCATION.

Our projected mission will be four degrees south of the equator at an altitude of 1,800 feet above sea level and on a slope admitting of excellent drainage. The climate is healthful, with cool nights. One can sleep under a blanket the year round.

The food supply is abundant, including millet, hill rice, maize, yams, peanuts, beans, cow peas, mandioca or cassava, bananas, plantains, sugar cane, and pineapples. The soil is fertile and is capable of producing a variety of cereals and vegetables. One finds chickens, eggs, sheep, goats, antelopes, buffalo meat, and fish. If the missionary desires it, he can vary his diet by adding snails, ants, caterpillars, and palm worms. The ants are half an inch long and are dried. With a little salt they are not bad and resemble rancid bacon in taste. The caterpillars are broiled, dipped in palm oil, and swallowed head foremost.

THE BATETELA.

This is a vigorous tribe of warriors, 400,000 strong, who migrated westward from the Lualaba River, which was explored in part by David Livingstone in the seventies. The bulk of the tribe is now found between the Lubefu and the Lomami Rivers. They are independent, self-respecting, and have never been conquered, except by the Belgians. They are expert hunters and builders, and the women are good agriculturists. I saw no native houses in Africa comparable to those erected by this tribe. They are constructed of solid posts and poles, wattle and mud for walls, heavy thatch roof, and the largest have wooden doors and windows. The main streets of their villages are over one hundred feet wide and frequently have one or more rows of shade trees. The streets are kept very clean, being swept every day.

The village of Mibangu, or Wembo-Niama, where our station is located, takes the name of

the chief and is three days' journey in a northerly direction from Lubefu, where we crossed the river of the same name on a suspension bridge of vines swung to the trees. Lubefu is a Belgian post some six days' journey east of Lusambo, on the Sankuru River. It was a twelve days' march overland from Lusambo to Wembo-Niama with our long caravan on our second journey.

FINDING MISSIONARIES.

Upon leaving the chief, Wembo-Niama, we promised him to return, if possible, within eighteen months. He said he would be cutting notches in a stick, one notch for each moon, until the eighteenth notch had been reached, when he would expect our shadows to fall on the ground at the full moon by the side of his shadow. Professor Gilbert and I returned to the United States. We found three missionaries and their wives ready to undertake the heroic task of evangelizing nearly half a million heathen and until very recently savages in the very heart of Africa. By every token the little band were providentially qualified for this service.

Dr. D. L. Mumpower, the physician, and Mrs. Mumpower, the trained nurse, were from Fayette and Doniphan, Mo.; Rev. C. C. Bush, the preacher, and Mrs. Bush, a teacher of experience, were from Charlestown, W. Va.; and Mr. J. A. Stockwell, agriculturist and builder, and Mrs. Stockwell, teacher and trained worker, were from Lake Charles, La. They were not only willing to go, but considered it a privilege to be intrusted with so responsible a mission. During the summer of 1913 they were sent to Belgium to study French, the official language of the Congo Belge.

MESSENGERS TO THE CHIEF.

My duties in the meantime took me to South America. Detained in Brazil several months, it was evident that it would not be possible to reach Wembo-Niama by the eighteenth moon. Pro-

fessor Gilbert was held by providential circumstances in the United States. I therefore wrote Rev. Motte Martin, of Luebo, asking him to send messengers to advise the chief of my unavoidable delay and request him to extend the time to twenty-four moons. Four men were sent, who walked one thousand miles, five hundred each way, were welcomed by Wembo-Niama, who loaded them with presents of food and a piece of cloth each, and then gave them his spear, saying: "Present this to Kabengele as a guarantee of protection when he comes with his people."

SECOND JOURNEY TO AFRICA.

On the 8th of November, 1913, Dr. W. M. Morrison, of the Presbyterian Mission, Rev. J. T. Mangum, of Union Springs, Ala., the six missionaries, little Mary Elizabeth Mumpower, and myself sailed from Antwerp, Belgium, for the Congo. We reached Matadi in three weeks, went up to Stanley Pool by rail, and found Captain Scott with the steamer Lapsley waiting for us. We returned with him to Luebo, nine hundred miles, where we spent ten days with the Presbyterian friends. The welcome to Dr. Morrison and our party was a royal one. Nearly fifteen hundred people, including the missionaries of the station, were gathered on the river bank to greet us. As we steamed up to the landing place "Trust and Obey" was started by our crew of sixty men, while from the shore "Onward, Christian Soldiers!" came floating back from the throats of over one thousand native converts. It was a scene and an hour rare in the annals of missions and one never to be forgotten.

Everything was done for our comfort by our noble friends during our stay. In addition to the supply of a ton of salt, cloth, school supplies, provisions, and a score of workmen, they offered to let us have two evangelists and their wives who might go as missionaries to the Batetela. One of these was Mudimbi, who had gone with

me on the first journey, and Malandola, his wife. Once more we traveled on the Lapsley back down the Lulua and Kasai, and, turning eastward into the Sankuru, we steamed five hundred miles to Lusambo, where we were entertained by Mr. and Mrs. A. C. McKinnon and Rev. R. D. Bedinger, of the Presbyterian Mission. A caravan of two hundred and thirty-five men and women was formed, Mr. Bedinger going with us, and we started on our twelve days' journey overland.

At Lubefu we found the chief awaiting us at the other end of the suspension bridge of vines. He had walked three days' journey to meet us As we passed from village to village we found the people ready to receive us, and in several cases the chiefs had prepared presents of millet, rice, fruit, and goats.

THE OPENING OF THE MISSION.

After many experiences our party arrived safely at Wembo-Niama's village one day before the twenty-fourth moon and were entertained the first night by the chief in his own house. The next day we moved out to the concession of twenty-two acres given us by the Belgian government and there, after clearing the ground, outlined the foundations for a church, a school, a hospital, storehouse, workshop, and three residences. I organized a Methodist Church of twenty-three members, of which number fifteen were transferred to us by the Presbyterians, a beautiful illustration of comity and brotherly coöperation. Preparation for building was begun by Mr. Stockwell with his workmen. A school was organized by Mrs. Bush and Mrs. Stockwell, medical work begun by Dr. and Mrs. Mumpower, and evangelistic work started by Mr. Bush.

We need another medical and evangelistic missionary, three women (two teachers and a trained nurse), and a business man who can keep the accounts of the mission, supervise caravans, and save the time of the other workers.

Our Congo Mission is near the middle of the

WEMBO-NIAMA AND BABY MUMPOWER.

continent and is as far from the sea as Kansas City is from New York. Neither miles nor money can measure the heroism of the three missionary women, and especially the young mother with her dear little baby, Mary Elizabeth, who bravely faced the unknown and plunged with their husbands into the heart of darkest Africa. As for me, it has strengthened my faith in God and in the constraining love of Jesus Christ and helps me to a realization that the spirit of heroic sacrifice in the Southern Methodist Church is not dead yet.

It is only a twelve days' journey on foot, due east from Wembo-Niama, to Nyangwe, the highest point ever reached by Livingstone on the Lualaba. It was from that point that he had twice to reluctantly retrace his steps, baffled by savages, by sickness, and by the slave trade. On Lake Bagweolo, near the source of the Lualaba, he breathed his last upon his knees. What words can be more appropriate at this point than those of the intrepid explorer, who wrote in his journal: "All I can say in my solitude is, may Heaven's rich blessing come down on every one—American, English, Turk—who will help to heal this open sore of the world"?

While the slave trade, under the scimitar and spear of the pitiless Arab, has been abolished, the reign and blight of sin and shame remain. To have a share in rolling back this dark cloud and in bringing in the kingdom of light and of our God is worth while. May the blessing of God our Father and of his Son Jesus Christ, who commissioned the Church to go and preach the gospel to every creature, rest and abide upon all who give and direct their money and their prayers in behalf of the evangelization of Africa!

A PRAYER FOR AFRICA.

We thank thee, O God, that the entrance of thy word giveth light. May that word have free course in the Dark Continent, where the people

have so long sat in the region and shad
death! In thy light may they see light.

Save the people from deadly sin and
savagery. Save from the blight of super
witchcraft, and immorality. Save from t
arice and selfish greed of unprincipled men
withered hopes be revived and saving f
Jesus Christ, mighty and triumphant faith,
evidence of the coming of the kingdom of
eousness and of peace!

We thank thee, O Son of God, for pione
martyrs who have laid down their lives t
a highway for the coming of the King.

Bless, we pray thee, O Christ, the hero
sionaries of the cross who have gone to th
ficult and dangerous field in thy name. M
cross, first laid upon the shoulders of an A
be as the shadow of a rock in a thirsty lan

Bless, we pray thee, O Holy Spirit, the
faithful witnesses who have been raised up
these native men and women be divinely
in the establishment of homes, schools,
industrial and social order which shall be
tian in ideals, in purpose, and in activity!
they ever be endued with willingness to be
timony to the wonders of divine love, with
to serve, and with grace to suffer for Jesus

May they who go forth in tears, bearin
cious seed, come again with rejoicing, b
in their sheaves from a redeemed Africa,
glory of God the Father! Amen.

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5 1854-1921.
3 The call of Africa / b
— Nashville, Tenn. : Bo
Missions, Methodist Epis
South, [ca. 1913].
12 p. : ports. ; 15 cm
Cover title.